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Government of the District of Columbia



Office of the City Administrator

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Testimony of  
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Interim City Administrator and  
Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice

***Public Roundtable on the District Government's  
Response to the Crime Emergency***

Committee on the Judiciary  
Phil Mendelson, Chair  
Council of the District of Columbia

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Room 500  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
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1:00 P.M.

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Good afternoon Chairperson Mendelson and members of the Committee on the Judiciary. I am Edward Reiskin, Interim City Administrator and Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice. On behalf of the Mayor, I am pleased to be joined today by Patricia Riley representing the United States Attorney for the District of Columbia and Chief Charles Ramsey of the Metropolitan Police Department to discuss the impact of the Chief's July 11, 2006 crime emergency declaration on the troubling spike in crime that we experienced early this summer. Although the Chief will go into greater detail on many of the provisions of the crime emergency legislation, I would also like to briefly address the success of the combined efforts of the entire District government to drive down crime using the tools provided by the Enhanced Crime Prevention and Abatement Emergency Act of 2006 that was passed with nearly unanimous support from the Council on July 19, 2006. A copy of my testimony is posted on my website at <http://dmpsdc.gov>.

Let me start by saying that the Chief was one of the first to recognize and react to this spike in crime that is plaguing cities large and small throughout the nation. When mayors and police chiefs from more than 50 cities and counties gathered in DC last month for the National Violent Crime Summit, one constant refrain was that crime is at a tipping point. Cities like Cincinnati, Philadelphia, and Orlando are reporting record numbers of homicides; other cities in the metropolitan Washington region are seeing robberies skyrocket.<sup>1</sup> Anthony Braga, criminologist at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, cites new "rules of engagement" for the violence, stating that increasingly younger "youth are clearly driving this [trend]" by "shooting each other over petty disputes."<sup>2</sup>

As you will hear from Chief Ramsey, we have seen a positive impact on our crime statistics since the crime emergency was declared. Overall crime is down about 14%, including an almost 15% drop in violent crime. Arrests, curfew violations, and firearm recoveries are all up, which does not even include the 337 weapons netted two weeks ago during MPD's one-day gun buy-back. For much of this success, my hat goes off to the members of the MPD who have put in long hours and sacrificed time with their families to keep our neighborhoods safe.

Still, the toll of violence in the District is heavy – especially on our children. It is unacceptable to lose one child to homicide. To lose three in 24-hours as happened this week is an outrage. For all the good work we are doing, these three young lives expose a breakdown in our mutual responsibilities to ensure that every child in the District enjoys a safe passage to adulthood. The police alone cannot make this happen; the government alone cannot make this happen. While we pursue long-term strategies to address the underlying causes of crime, our collective energies and resources must also be put toward driving down crime now.

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<sup>1</sup> Klein, Allison, "Police Chiefs Cite Youths in Crime Rise, Call for More Federal Funds," Washington Post, August 31, 2006, Page A13.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

To support our response to the crime emergency, the Mayor requested \$18.2 million to be made available from contingency reserve funds to cover expenditures ranging from police overtime to enhanced programming for youth. Mr. Chairman, as a result of your leadership and the support of your colleagues, we have been able to leverage these resources to expand our operational capacity in the following ways:

- **MPD:** \$10.6 million in overtime in addition to scheduling adjustments placed several hundred more officers on the street, increasing the enforcement of curfews to prevent young people from being victimized, removing more law breakers from the streets, and seizing more weapons. Plus:
  - \$2.3 million paid for the purchase and installation of 49 cameras for neighborhood crime fighting;
  - \$250,000 paid for MPD's gun buy-back on September 16, 2006;
  - \$160,000 covered fuel costs for the additional police presence; and
  - \$105,000 covered the creation of a juvenile data system for MPD.
- **OUC:** \$40,000 in overtime to help dispatchers handle the increased radio traffic during the period of the crime emergency from additional officers on patrol and officer-initiated activity.
  - Despite the increased demands of the crime emergency and the agency's relocation to the new Unified Communications Center across town, the agency maintained its performance targets for answer speed and the queue-to-dispatch time interval.
- **APRA:** \$260,000 jump started Project Threshold, which is sending teams into targeted communities until 10:00 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday to provide community-based outreach, assessment, and referrals for substance use disorder treatment services for both youth and adults.
  - The areas chosen were based on crime analysis provided by MPD and designed to decrease substance abuse-related crime through enhanced treatment access. The three teams of two outreach workers and one licensed/certified clinician have been operating out of three sites, which are co-located at three neighborhood collaboratives: Columbia Heights/Shaw, Edgewood/Brookland, and South Washington/West River.
  - As of last week, Project Threshold had screened 1,314 people and conducted 156 interventions, 51 assessments, and 50 referrals. All told, 46 people have been admitted to substance abuse treatment facilities as a result of this coordinated street outreach initiative with the crime emergency.
- **DDOT:** \$1.8 million paid for the repair of 2,404 streetlight outages citywide and upgrades of nearly 500 streetlights to 150 watts in targeted alleys, as well as the purchase of new streetlight fixtures.
  - Funds also supported the study for and installation of MPD's crime-fighting cameras on streetlights, and the 20 wooden posts that were purchased and installed for CCTV cameras that could not be placed on existing streetlight poles. Further, DDOT identified and pruned 207 trees to clear

obstructions to streetlights. To accomplish these lighting improvements, DDOT decreased its service time in crime focus areas from 72 hours to 48 hours.

- Two alleys in Ward 7 and Ward 1 were repaired and repaved.
- To improve signage and visibility, nearly 2,300 parking, traffic, and camera signs were made and installed.
- **DCRA:** \$45,000 allowed DCRA to complete 6,145 inspections in targeted hot spots and 3,898 in targeted Great Streets areas. In these areas DCRA identified 559 units for clean and secure abatements, of which the owner has abated 275 units and DCRA has abated 284 units.
- **DPW:** \$100,000 allowed DPW to deploy 24 additional staff to a different area in Ward 7 each week to clean alleys and streets. The crews removed 384 tons of garbage. The agency also participated in four fightbacks and towed 95 vehicles.

A priority for the Mayor during the crime emergency was to increase positive outlets for kids to avoid them getting hurt or in trouble. The Council directed significant resources to the Department of Parks and Recreation, Public Libraries, and to community groups through the Mayor's Effective Youth Development Strategy:

- **DPR:** \$919,000 for expanded recreation center hours, increased activities and trips, work with community partners to provide more services, increased movies in the park dates, 10 more Roving Leaders, increased Roving Leader presence in PSAs 504, 104 and 302 at night from 6:00 p.m. to midnight, increased pool hours, and expanded schedule of pool activities.
  - The expanded hours and programming attracted an average of 555 participants to the centers nightly according to sign-in sheets. King Greenleaf, Rosedale, and Kennedy attracted exceptionally strong participation with an average of 106, 83, and 75 visitors respectively each night.
  - Plus \$331,000 in crime emergency funds that were sub-granted to CBOs to fill gaps in programming for youth where there were either no recreation centers or centers with no DPR capacity for late night programs. Some of the agencies receiving funding to provide additional programming for youth across the city include Keelys Boxing Program (\$30,000), Neighbors of Seaton Place (\$21,800), Latin American Youth Center (\$24,000), and ROOT (\$35,000).
- **DCPL:** \$400,000 for DC Public Libraries to offer a series of programs for youth in conjunction with the District's crime emergency designed to prevent violence and engage young adults in positive activities during the months of August, September, and October 2006. Branches were selected based on Young Adult circulation statistics, access to neighborhoods throughout the city, proximity to middle and high schools, and the availability of Homework Help Centers.
- **Youth Strategy:** \$380,000 to strengthen and grow the Partnership for Success initiative for at-risk youth. OCTO has also joined the effort and is currently

developing the website and database system for the Rewards Store which will go live sometime in November. Plus:

- \$200,000 divided among Peaceholics, Cease Fire, Parent Watch, and Mentors Work for gang and crew mediation;
- \$150,000 to support adult re-entry programs at UDC for clients seeking certification in home inspections, food preparation, or to get a commercial drivers license;
- \$70,000 to engage residents of PSA 104 to develop a targeted youth development strategy; and
- \$50,000 for the Columbia Heights/Shaw neighborhood collaborative to support the expansion of the Gang Intervention Partnership (GIP) in PSA 302.

In addition to this injection of resources to expand our operational capacity and provide positive activities for youth citywide, the Council also sent a strong signal of support for providing new crime-fighting tools through the crime emergency legislation. Without venturing too far into the Chief's testimony, I do want the committee and the public to know that the Mayor strongly supports the extension of several key provisions of the crime emergency bill beyond October 19, 2006, when they are set to expire. To continue to drive down crime and to fully evaluate the effectiveness of these new tools, the Mayor needs to retain the authority to adjust curfew hours and to utilize cameras for crime-fighting purposes.

The Mayor also strongly urges the Council to extend the juvenile records sharing provision and the rebuttable presumption provisions for adults and juveniles. To ensure the confidentiality of information shared with the police on certain juveniles under the legislation, MPD will soon be going live with a new data system and procedures to govern the flow of information. I understand that the US Attorney's Office and OAG have some preliminary data on the number of times they have sought detention for adults and juveniles under the adult and juvenile rebuttable presumption provisions. While Ms. Riley will go into greater detail today, I look forward to the committee's hearing on the permanent version of this provision for a full discussion of its merits.

In sum, we must not ease up on our efforts. On the contrary, we must redouble them by simultaneously extending elements of the crime emergency to stay ahead of the curve and by investing in long-term strategies.

Finally, this discussion of our crime emergency response requires a few words on the Mayor's crime prevention legacy. Throughout the Mayor's two terms he has sought significant funding increases in areas that address some of the underlying factors that contribute to crime, such as unemployment, homelessness, and blighted neighborhoods. Way to Work, New Communities, Great Streets, Homeless No More – these visionary initiatives, combined with increased support for subsidized childcare and affordable housing, represent a holistic, far-sighted approach to crime prevention.

To truly have an impact, we know that we have to provide supports like childcare, which when not available acts as a double stressor in a household by requiring logistical juggling in order to ensure children's needs are met while often preventing one parent from entering the workforce. That's why we are working to give residents the tools to earn a living and then connecting them to the city's prosperity. That's why we are funding the previously unfunded Housing Production Trust Fund. And that is why we are transforming some of the District's major corridors into thriving, active streets.

With the Mayor's leadership, we have brought focus and coordination to bear on our most intractable problems in our most challenged neighborhoods – and we have seen the benefits. From hot spots to core teams and the Mayor's Effective Youth Development Strategy, we have built a culture in District government of shared responsibility for crime prevention.

And of course, the community plays an essential role in crime fighting, too. The Mayor believes that the police cannot be effective if its officers don't engage the people who live and work in the communities they serve. That's why the Chief has made community engagement the centerpiece of MPD's Policing for Prevention strategy. Focused law enforcement as a means of intervention followed by aggressive prosecution and progressive sanctions sends an unambiguous message to offenders that criminal behavior will not be tolerated. But only through combining focused law enforcement with an emphasis on neighborhood partnerships and systemic prevention – and by adding new tools to meet new challenges – can we continue to make our city a safer place for everyone.

In closing, thank you for this opportunity to present testimony today on our response to the crime emergency. I thank the committee for its support in July and look forward to working with the committee to continue making our city a safer place. I am now available for any questions that you may have.